Ace - Hi info

ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS OF HAWAII

BBS # (808) 261 - 2184

FEATURE: THE VIDEO KEY

from Practical Solutions

by Bill Buck

Practical Solutions is a company specializing in making hardware products that make life easier for the ST owner. They have built a reputation for quality at a reasonable price. All of their products to date have been well received; none of them have been duds.

Their most expensive item (list $99.95) item is Video Key, a device that lets you use any composite monitor, TV or VCR with your ST. The early 520 ST's had a built in RF modulator; using the RF output, you could hook up the ST to a standard TV sets RF antenna terminals in a manner reminiscent of the old 8-bit systems. The newer 1040 ST's lacked this modulator; they were for "serious" use and were to be hooked up to Atari's own monitor. Later, some models, designated "STFM" were produced that included the RF output. At any rate, the Video Key adds the missing RF modulator, but it also gives you a lot more: a composite video output that gives better results than the RF output, when used with a composite monitor or one of the new breed of "monitor/TV" sets. In addition, there is a separate audio output jack, which you can hook up to the monitor (if it has a sound input jack), or to a high fidelity system for superior sound.

WHO NEEDS THE VIDEO KEY?

If you have a 1040 ST with color 1224 monitor, you don't need the Video Key unless there are special circumstances. I am in this category (in fact I have both mono and color monitors). However, as a high school math teacher, I have a large 30" NEC monitor in my classroom, connected to an apple IIe computer. There are some nice (but slow) graphing programs for classroom demonstrations. (The school provides all this!) None of the software comes close to the power and versatility of the ULTRA GRAPH program, by Blake Arnold and Phil Mast, that appeared in ST LOG Nov. '88 issue. With the Video Key, I can lug my ST to school for demonstrations, without having to carry the Atari 1224 color RGB monitor (which is too small for classroom use anyway). The ACE-HI users group uses the Video Key whenever we meet in the McCully library. The meeting room has two color composite monitors suspended overhead, with a single input in the wall up front. It is a simple matter to hook up both monitors via the Video Key, as well as the regular RGB monitor using the pass through monitor port on the Video Key.

For the individual, you may have an ST with just a monochrome monitor.

(continued on page 2)

Sneak - A - Peek Special Report:

HISOFT BASIC, from MichTron

by R. Pompon

Up until now, GFA Basic 2.0 has been the convention for ST Basic programming but now along comes HiSoft Basic to shake things up. Unlike it's predecessors, HiSoft is a compiler not an interpreter. This means you can create stand alone programs without having to buy a compiler separately. It doesn't use line numbers and is compatible with PC Microsoft QuickBasic 3 source codes as well as ST Basic. It supports GEM, AES, VDI, BIOS, XBIOS and GEMDOS routines with easy to use libraries. The compiler is versatile and will compile programs as a GEM Program (.PRG), TOS program (.TOS) or a TOS take parameters (.TTP).

What I didn't like:

1) The manual is a bit sketchy and has no index.

2)The editor is not intelligent so debugging can be difficult at times.

3) HiSoft is faster than GFA 2.0 but not THAT much faster.

4) for GFA converts like myself, HiSoft's command set is similiar enough to GFA to fool you into expecting other GFA commands to work (which do not exist).

What I liked:

1) The libraries with GEM routines are a delight to have and so easy to use.

2) Recursion in Basic! Yes, your subroutines can call themselves and this adds tremendously to the power of any language.

3) A compiler and editor in Borland's "Turbo" style, very easy to use and create sophisticated software with.

4) Compiler options to either maximize speed or safety against crashes.

5) Powerful commands that give you everything you wanted without sacrificing speed.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Ace-Hi info

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Ace-Hi Info is published monthly by the Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Hawaii. Layout and Editing by Bill Buck and Raymond Pompon. Printing and distribution by Bill Whalen and Baron Sekiya. Copies are distributed at meetings and are mailed to members of Ace-Hi. A limited number of copies are also available to the public at Data-1 and Computronics computer stores at no charge.

Advertising

Classified Ads: $1.50 per column inch. (one inch per month free to members)

Space ads:

1/4 page @ $ 7.50
1/2 page @ $12.50
3/4 page @ $25.00

July Meeting Schedule

Fridays, July 14th and 28th at the Kalihi Library. 7:00 pm
(it's Air Conditioned!)

and don't forget the

Annual Auction!
at the Moanalua Community Center on Saturday July 29

1:00 pm to 6:00 pm

(Video Key, cont)

Perhaps you wanted to save a few bucks, or were interested mostly in productivity software or MAC emulation, so that color was not needed. But occasionally you would like to play an occasional game in color. With the Video Key, you can use your existing composite monitor or TV, rather than buying the Atari 1224. Or perhaps you have the color monitor, but are heavy into graphics and animation and want to record your efforts on videotape. You may need the RF output provided by the Video Key.

HOW WELL DOES IT WORK?

The Video Key is designed primarily for use in low resolution. I tried it on my old Commodore 1702 monitor (first disconnecting it from my classic and still used 8-bit). I also tried it on the family 30" Toshiba TV (using the composite input). As you would expect, the picture is not as sharp as on the 1224 RGB monitor, but it is quite acceptable. It looks similar to the sharpness of the picture from my 8-bit. The colors are fairly clear, though somewhat different from the RGB picture - twiddling the color & tint knobs on the monitor fixed that up. There was a bit of color "crawl" (a sort of "barber pole" effect), but that was almost completely eliminated by turning the small screw on the bottom of the Video Key. This adjusts the "exclusive Colorloc circuitry" to match the ST.

I then tried the Video Key in medium rez. Here, the output is not nearly as good. The manual points out that the Video Key is not recommended for use with 80 column text, and sure enough, the text is barely readable, although turning down the color control on the monitor helps somewhat. The manufacturer had to make a decision and opted for the best possible lo-rez picture: the manual states that to optimize for medium rez by modifying the bandpass circuits "would cause the low rez color to suffer tremendously."

Finally, the Video Key does not operate in high resolution. You can plug a monochrome monitor into the pass through port and it will work fine, but you have to unplug it before running a color program via the Video Key. If you have Practical Solutions Monitor Master switchbox, you can plug it into the Video Key and use it to select monitors. The Video Key senses which monitor is enabled, and turns itself on only in color mode.

RGB? COMPOSITE? RF? WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The Atari 1224 color monitor uses an RGB signal, a type of video signal that allows higher resolution displays. The red, green, blue, and sync signals travel on separate wires. The monitor does not have to decode the signals; this produces the best picture.

The Video Key takes the Atari RGB signals and converts them to a color composite signal. This signal, defined the NTSC standard, has all the necessary color, brightness, and sync information combined on a single wire. The composite monitor has to decode these signals back into their separate components. This results in a lower quality picture than RGB, but has the advantage of compatibility with many video systems.

Finally, an RF signal is like a TV broadcast signal. It combines a composite video signal with the audio signal and a carrier wave in a form that allows a regular TV to receive it through its RF antenna terminals. The TV or VCR tuner must then decode all this information; there is a considerable amount of interference, resulting in a still lower quality picture than either of the above.

SUMMARY

The Video Key is a well designed and useful product. While it is not for everybody, if you need it you really *need* it; it is indispensable for some of us. I would suggest that anyone considering purchase be sure to get a demonstration so as to assess the picture quality first. One final thought: the long awaited STACY (Atari Laptop computer) has its own 640 x 400 pixel screen, the equivalent of a monochrome monitor. If you are a traveler and own a STACY, you could bring along your Video Key and a few games to play on the hotel room TV!

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Jester's Domain

by Riki

Pssst!!! Hey Buddy?!

Yes you.... How would you like some great software for your computer? How much and what kind? Well, just step into this alley and I'll tell you what I've got.

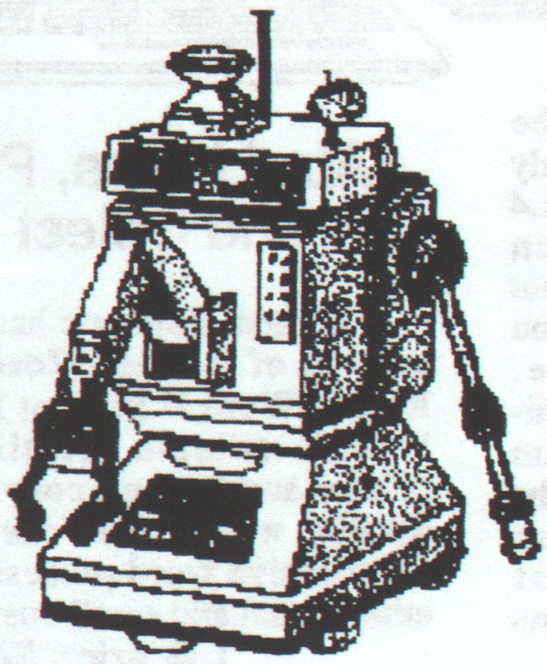
Seriously, when I see all of the great shareware and public domain software out for the ST, I wonder if I am actually "stealing it for a song."

Here are five public domain/shareware programs available in our club's library.

UNARC ELITE
Version 2.0
by Stephen M. Thomas

This program is a joy to use. It only does one thing, and it does it well. This program unarcs arc files--period. It will search the active directory for any file with an "ARC" extention and unarc them into its own separate folder. After it unarcs the file it will delete the arc file, leaving only the unarced folder on the disk. It will perform this all with a touch of a button.

This program is shareware. If you like this program, the author wishes you to send him "whatever you think is fair." This program will run on both a color and monochrome system.

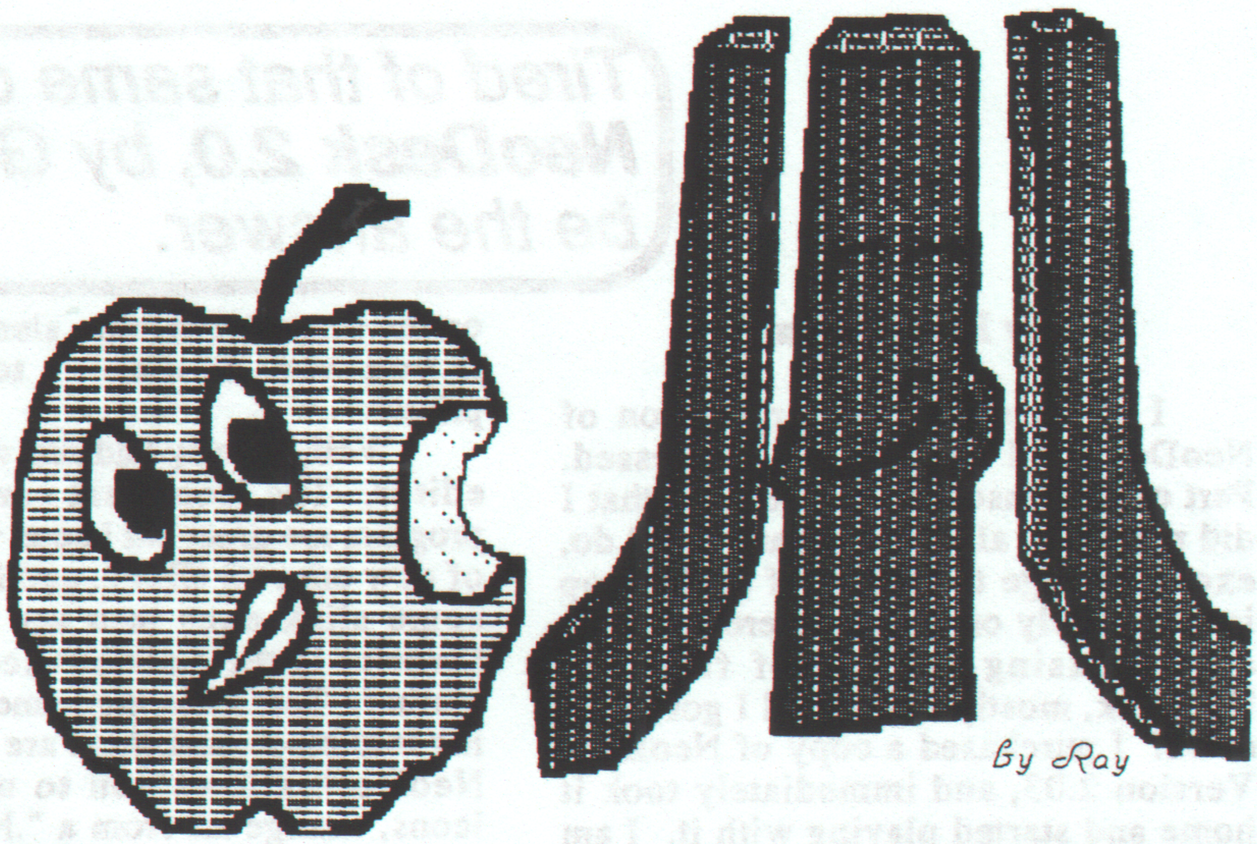


TETRIS

This is a public domain version of Mirrorsoft's smash hit game TETRIS. Tetris is a game in which there are seven different shapes falling one at a time from the top of the screen to the bottom. The object is to position the shapes to create a line from one end of the screen to the other. While this may seem like an easy task, believe me it isn't.

I own the commercial version of Tetris, but I perfer the PD version. In fact, Spectrum Holobyte (the company who is marketing Tetris in the US), admitted that the programmer who did the translation of the game for the ST did a substandard job, and that they "were not going to use that programmer again." Spectrum Holobyte has since come out with a newer version of Tetris for the ST, which is supposed to play much better.

The public domain version has no sound (which is fine with me since I turn the volume down when I play this game), and it only runs on a monochrome monitor. I'm not sure if it will run with a program such as OMNIRES, but if you own a mono system then check this game out.



LARN
Version 12.0 (no kidding)
ST conversion by Cornelius Caesar

This an adventure/dungeon and dragons type game which was originally written for the UNIX system. In this game you explore a dungeon (maze), kill various monsters, collect vast treasures and cash them in for money which you will need to purchase better armor, weapons, and potions.

This game has a save game feature so that you can leave the game to eat dinner, take a shower, use the bathroom, or answer the phone, come back and pick up where you left off. This game will run only on a color system, and is public domain (free).

BOLO
By Meinolf Schneider

This game is a souped up version of Arkanoid/Breakout. It features fifty screens with a variety of special blocks which do different things such as launch killer mines, award you an extra life, etc...

The paddle can move anywhere on the screen which means you can hit the ball anywhere on the screen. The ball's path is dependent on the screen you are playing; on some screens it will deflect off of the borders at an angle opposite from the way it hit,, and on other levels the ball reacts like a volleyball, rebounding upward off of the paddle with gravity bringing it back down.

This game will run on both a color and a monochrome system, and is public domain.

FLU
(Virus symptom Demonstration)
Version 1.20
By George R. Woodside

Knowledge is a very valuable tool which is essential for detecting malicious pranks by deranged hackers. This programs show what the most common types of viruses are and what effects they do to the system they infect. The author wishes to educate the users to detect when a virus is present by the symptoms they create.

This program is absolutely safe to use. It will run on both color and monochrome systems, and is public domain.

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*Tired of that same old desktop? **NeoDesk 2.0**, by Gribnif may be the answer.*

by Bill Whalen

I had seen an earlier version of NeoDesk and was not too impressed. Part of the reason may have been that I did not know all the program could do, except change the shape of thedesktop icons. Lately on GEnie, there has been an increasing number of files for NeoDesk, mostly icons, and I got interested. I purchased a copy of NeoDesk Version 2.03, and immediately took it home and started playing with it. I am impressed!

The following review lists some of the highlights of NeoDesk. NeoDesk is an improvement to the GEM desktop that Atari uses. Not only does it offer custom icons similar to the Macintosh, it allows hard disk users more flexibility by simply copying programs icons from folders to the desktop itself, programs most used can be called up without searching through folder after folder. This feature alone makes NeoDesk the program I have been looking for. Most menuing programs offering ready access to executable files require users to exit the menu program to do various housekeeping chores, but with NeoDesk, by having menu type icons on the desktop, you can easily select a program or move to a folder to do file management tasks, with no menu program in your way.

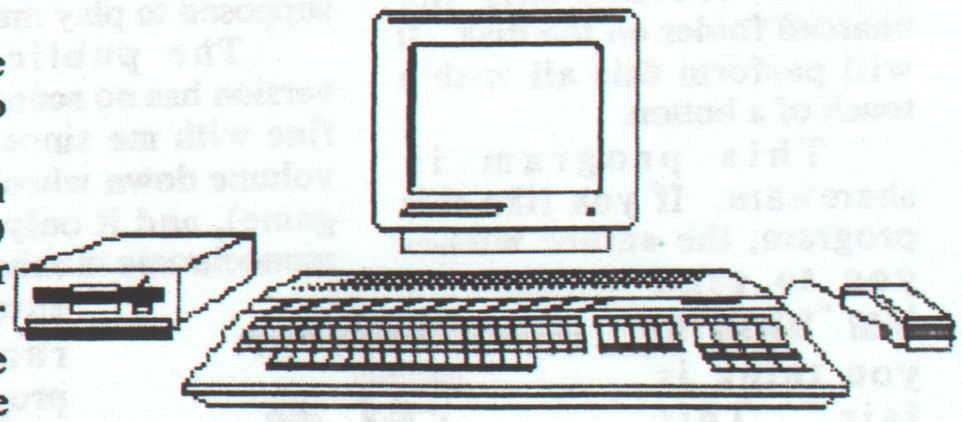
One of my favorite goodies is the "MOVE" selection. After a session on GEnie, I copy new files from my hard disk to a floppy for storage. With NeoDesk, when I pull the appropriate icon to the floppy, the alert box asks if I want to copy or move. Configuring the desktop, the user can select "copy only", "move only", or "ASK" so the alert box appears. I chose the ask mode so I can select copy or move as the case requires. The move selection saves the next step of deleting the file I have copied. GEM should have such a feature. Another cutie is the printer icon. If you wish to print out a text file, just drag it to the printer icon. To view instead of print, just double click and the file is displayed on the screen. No more alert box asking if you want to display to screen or printer.

Well, I really had fun with the icon editor. The icons that come with the program are great but I soon found plenty of new ones on GEnie, and incorporated some slick ones into my setup. My favorite is the Calamus icon with the feather. Tetris has the game pieces falling into place, and there are many more. NeoDesk allows you to use original icons, change all from a ".NIC" file, or just substitute or add specific icons from the ".NIC" file. If you like a specific icon for a specific program, but the icon you found has a different name, just change the name for that program by clicking on the icon and a box similar to the GEM Show Info box will appear. Rename the icon to the exact name as the file in the folder or on the desktop (DBMAN.PRG, etc), save your setup, and when you next see the icon it will have its own distinctive shape. Icon names can be individual or general, wild cards can be used such as *.PRG. If you make some really nice icons, don't forget to upload your personal ".NIC" file to GEnie for others to try.

GEM programs cannot be run from the AUTO folder, so NeoDesk comes with STARTGEM.PRG, a program you can place in your AUTO folder, which on bootup looks for STARTGEM.INF file on your boot disk. Two .INF files are provided, one for floppy and one for hard disk. This .INF file tells the program to run NeoDesk, so you see only NeoDesk from the start. WithVersion 1.4 of TOS, you will be able to autorun NeoDesk without STARTGEM.PRG, but until the new ROMs are available, you will have to go the longer route. NeoDesk does not run under low resolution, however it works fine in medium resolution but I feel best in mono. In the NeoDesk folder, the program maintains separate data files for users of monochrome and color monitors, allowing different setups.

Gribnif Software gets an A+ for the manual. It is well written, easy to follow, and contains sample desktop snaps to point the way. If InfoWorld reviewed the manual, they would also point out the step by step layout, the table of contents, and index. I was able to get NeoDesk up and running within a few minutes, and am learning more about the program each day. I was a skeptic until I purchased the program and started using it. I feel it is a great asset, one I wish I had when the machines first became available.The current selection of GEM icons suddenly looks a little sad. Hopefully some day Atari will incorporate some of the NeoDesk attributes into GEM.

NeoDesk 2.0, The Desktop Alternative
by Gribnif Software
P.O. Box 350
Hadley, MA 01035
(413) 584-7887
$49.95 list price



Atari News, Previews and Select Fews

Regent Software has released a new version of **Regent Word 2** for the ST. Regent Word II Student Edition features Double column printing, Unlimited printer support, no copy protection and 40,000 word spell checker. It is an inexpensive word processor aimed at the educational and small business market
List price: $24.95

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The Revenge of *INSIDE ACER'S*

Ghostwritten by the Spirit

A few years ago, Muskrat used to write a column called Inside Acer's which featured a short bio of selected ACE-HI members. Now, rather than featuring a single member, I decided to give you a smattering of eight members. Now is your chance to meet your fellow members!

STAN ALAMA, "Mousie"
Stan is 32 years old and owns an Atari 1040ST. His favorite computer activity is using Drawing programs. He also enjoys playing F-16 Combat pilot. He plays guitar and was born right here in Honolulu.

DENNIS BISHOP, "Starlord"
Dennis not only owns an Atari 800XL and 1200XL but also a T/S-1000 and a T/S-2068. He loves Atari because of it's cheap price. He is totally into model rocketry. He also breeds cats and runs RAMX Software Co. (maybe you've seen the ads in Antic & Analog?). If you ask him how he can handle all these things, he'll just reply with a wink "What? Me worry?"

BILL BUCK, "Buckaroo"
Bill's a long time ACE-HI member and accordingly he owns a 1040ST as well as 800, 130XE and 1200XL 8bits. He was born in suburban Chicago but has been living in Hawaii for 24 years. He plays the Oboe and reads sci-fi by the pound.

ROBERT DEAN, "Gunner"
Bob's owns a One-megged 520, an 800, a Ramboed 800XL, two 800XL's, a 130XE and a partridge in a pear tree. (and he's only 34!) He enjoys Telecomputing so look for his handle. He claims to have discovered computers by accident.

EDWARD MANABE, "Jester"
Don't call him Edward, call him Riki. He is 1,009,152,000 seconds old and doesn't 'own' a computer (He doesn't believe in slavery). When I asked him which computer he would like to be, he replied "the one with the longest interface." He bowling, going to the movies and writing smart answers to my surveys.

PHIL MUSGRAVE, "Muskrat or Sysrat"
Phil's one of our more busier members. He's currently ACE-HI BBS sysop but his former jobs include newsletter editor, president and was instrumental in the shaping of the board of directors. He got into computers when he put together a Brainiac set at age 12. He hails from San Pedro, California but has been a local for over 20 years.

JOHN WALSH, "J.W."
If you have ever called an Atari BBS, then you have heard of John. He loves using his MEGA-2 to go modeming and adventure gaming (especially Dungeon Master). He is a sports fanatic and is a diehard Celtics fan.

BILL WHALEN
Bill's our club secretary/treasurer and handles the bulk of the nasty accounting that keeps this club afloat. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri and moved here in '76. He got into computers through his daughters but is heavily into computer productivity.

DONT FORGET THE AUCTION!
HELP US WITH DONATIONS

COMPUTER HUMOR

by Chuck Kay

It's time for a blast from the past. I have compiled some commentaries on selected acient computer text books. Take a glance and see where we came from. Remember: "He who laughs last didn't get the joke."

Mesa Language Manual, Version 5.0 (Xerox, 1979)
Recall the years when new computer languages and dialects abounded. When every new piece of hardware urged the creation of a new compiler and the simultaneous obsolescence of a million lines of code. Here is Xerox in it's heyday.

Pilot: An Operating System for a Personal Computer (CACM, 1980)
This is a look at what happens when you implement an operating system in Mesa. You get a system that took 10 man years to write containing 24,000 lines of code and for all that you get an operating system that can only read one directory and can't protect itself from a program accidently zeroing all memory. Read this any time you feel Macintosh isn't worth of it's roots.

LISP 1.5 Programmer's Manual (MIT Press, 1972)
John McCarthy's classic! Obscure language notation enlivens practically every page. An item you'll be proud to place amoung those humdrum Unix and C texts on your shelf.

BLISS-11 (CMU/DECUS 1974)
One great optimizing compiler, marred only slightly by the fact that it wasn't written in itself, generated code for a machine that it couldn't run on, wasn't portable, had a mindless scheme for ordering booleans, and for it's complexity was unpleasant to write in.

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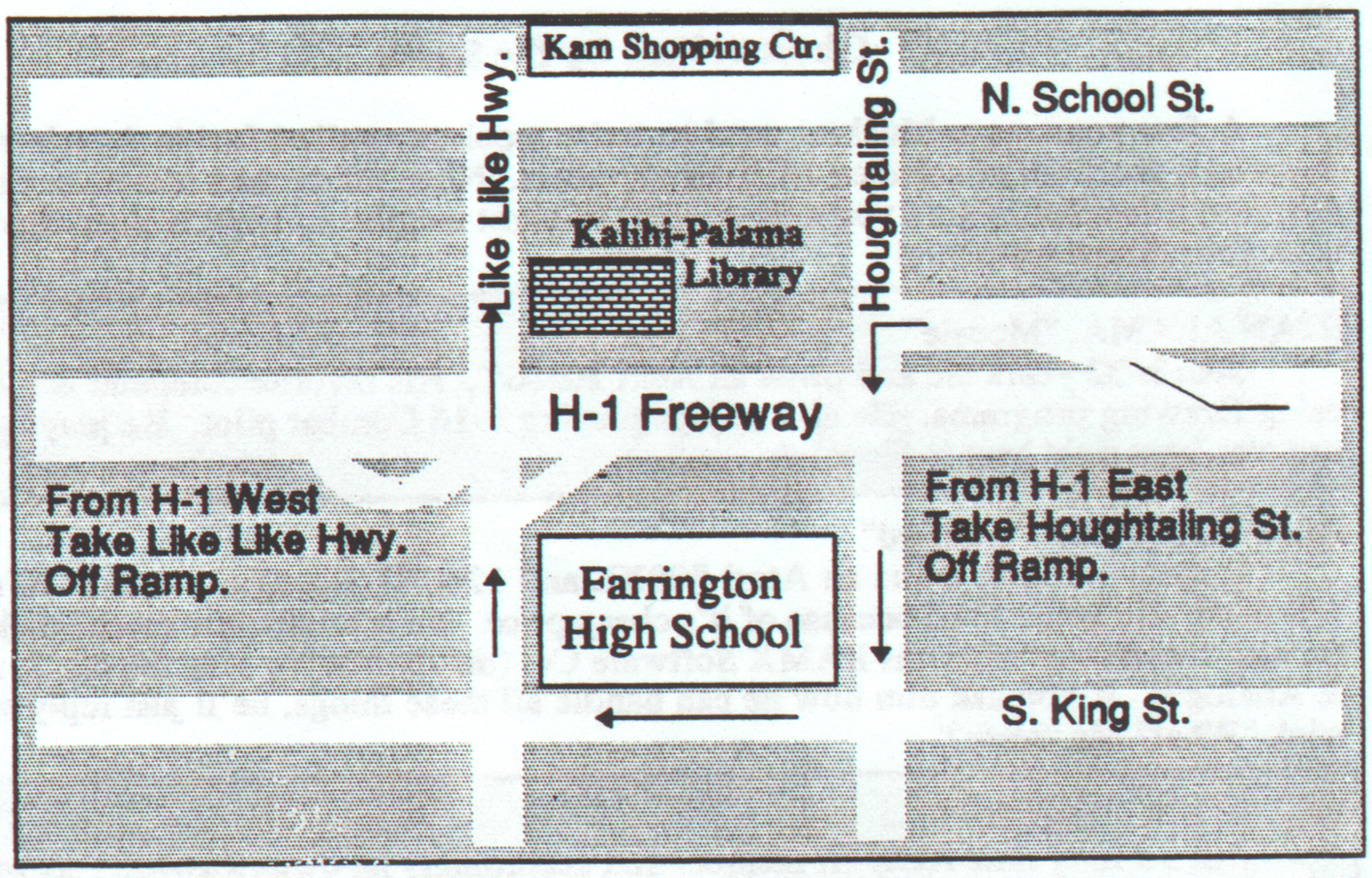
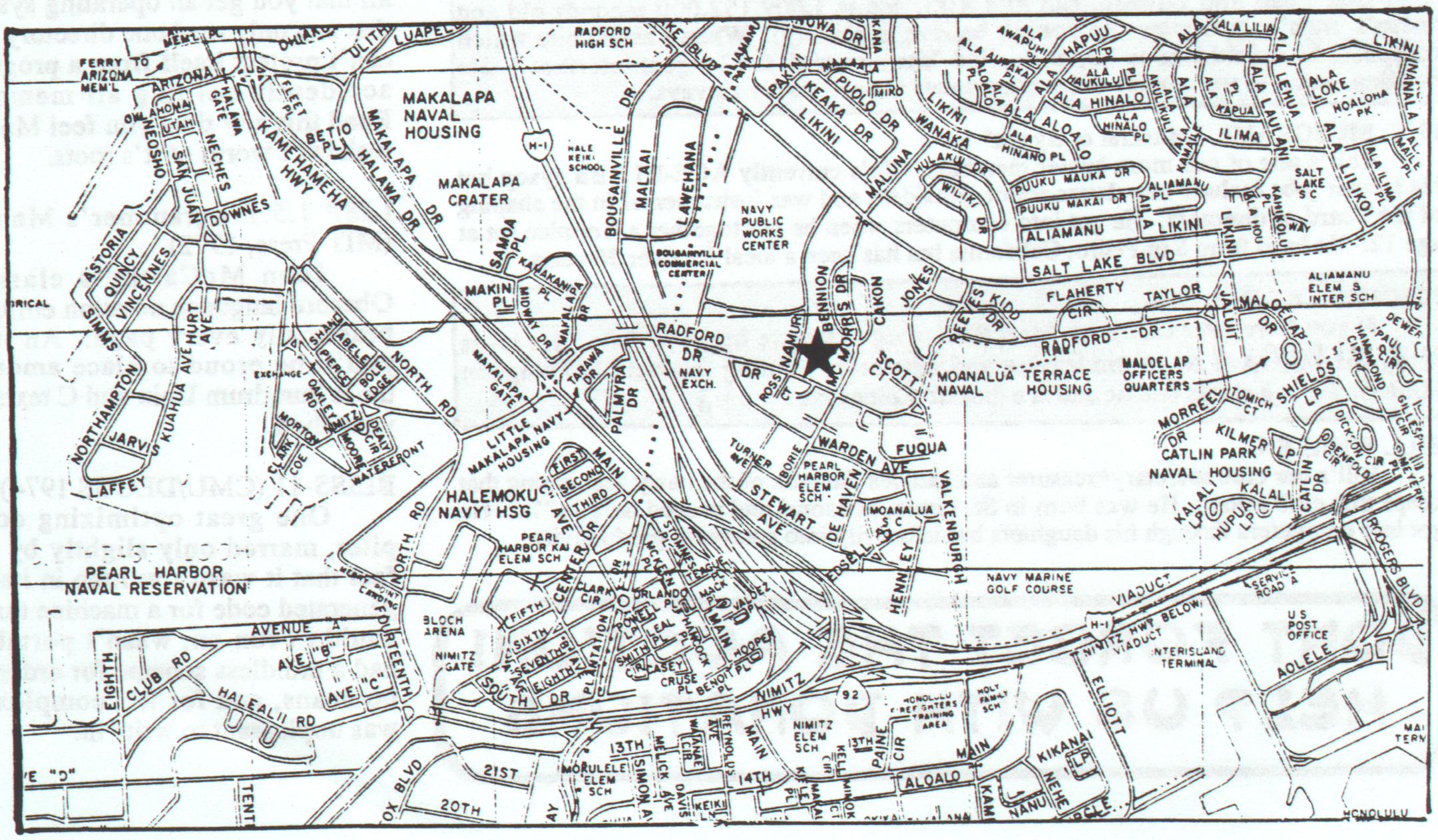
The Kalihi-Palama Library MUST be approached via LikeLike northbound. It is the very first right after you cross over the bridge over H-1, *before* you get to the Bishop Museum. If you miss the turn it's a bummer, since you have to circle around clockwise on N. School, Houghtailing, S. King to Like Like again!



THE ACE-HI AUCTION will be held at the Moanalua Comunity center, located across from the Pearl Harbor Navy Commissary (OFF BASE) on NAMUR (see the star on the map below). Approach via Kam highway, turn mauka onto Radford Dr. Follow Radford (stay in the center lane), cross over the freeway and eventually you will see a navy gas station on your left . Turn left at the gas station on Namur, and the community center is there, on your right, across from the gas station!



Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Hawaii

User Group Support For You

CAD
Database
Desktop Publishing
Desktop Video
Education
Games
Graphic Arts
Mac & IBM Emulation
MIDI Music
Programing
Simulations
Spread Sheets
Telecommunications
Word Processing

Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Hawaii is a user group for the owners of all Atari computers. If you've just bought an Atari computer and need help ACE-HI is here for you. Our members can answer your questions dealing with hardware, software and more. If you're already an Atari expert come down to a meeting and share your knowledge with others.

Macintosh and IBM emulator support for the Atari ST is also available for Atari PC, Magic Sac/Spectre and PC-Ditto users.

ACE-HI has a vast public domain software library for its members and runs an electronic bulletin board for modem users. ACE-HI is a registered Atari User Group which provides our members with some of the latest announcements from Atari Corp.

ACE-HI meetings are 7p.m. every 2nd and 4th Friday of the month at various locations in Honolulu. Additional Leeward Oahu meetings occur on the 3rd Saturday at 12 noon. Watch the *Honolulu Calendar* section of the Honolulu Advertiser for ACE-HI meeting notices.

For a schedule of the current month's meetings call ACE-HI president Baron Sekiya at (808) 735-3817. If you have a modem call the ACE-HI BBS at (808) 261-2184 [300-2400bps]. Or write **ACE-HI, P.O. Box 23076, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.**

ACE-HI MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

❑ Youth Membership $10/yr. ❑ Adult Membership $20/yr. ❑ Family Membership $30/yr.

Name(Individual or Family): _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip : _____

Telephone:(Home) _____ (Work) _____

Please provide us with information on your computer system to help us better meet your needs:

Atari Computer: ❑ 400/800 ❑ 600/800XL ❑ 1200XL ❑ XEGS
❑ 520ST ❑ 1040ST ❑ MEGA ❑ STACY ❑ TT
❑ PORTFOLIO ❑ PC4 ❑ OTHER: _____

External Drive(s): Brand/Model: _____

Hard Disk: Capacity _____ Megabytes Brand/Model: _____

Printer: Brand/Model: _____

Modem: Brand/Model: _____ Baud Rate: _____

❑ I would like to volunteer to help club activities and/or contribute to the newsletter; please call me.

Send your membership application and check to ACE-HI, P.O. Box 23076, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.

Youth membership for those under 18 years of age. Make your check payable to **ACE-HI.**

COMPUTRONICS™

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CMI 16MHZ PROCESSOR ACCELERATOR FOR THE ATARI ST

16mhz 68000 accelerator w/socket for the Atari Blitter, a socket for the 68881 math co-processor, and two sockets for 1MB fast roms.

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MOUSE BALL	$49	XYBOTS	$32.95
3.5 D/S DISKS	$14	FORGOTTEN WORLDS	$32.95
		AIRBORNE RANGER	$34.95

AIRPORT
831-5555

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prices good thru 8/10/89

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